

Message Text

SECRET

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11

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 CCO-00 INRE-00 DPW-01 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 IO-12 RSR-01 /081 W
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O R 160936 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3066

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

USDEL FRANCE

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 1936

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PINS, PINT, PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: PACE OF LAO NEGOTIATIONS: PROGRESS APPARENTLY MADE BY
SUB- COMMITTEES

1. IN PAST FEW DAYS, WE HAVE RECEIVED SEVERAL INDICATIONS THAT THINGS ARE MOVING AGAIN IN THE RLG/ LPF NEGOTIATIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE VIENTIANE AGREEMENT. UNTIL RECENTLY, THE TALKS HAD BEEN STALLED BY LPF INSISTENCE THAT TWO JOINT PROTOCOLS-- ONE POLITICAL, ONE MILITARY-- BE DRAFTED COVERING IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL ARTICLES OF THE VIENTIANE 1973 AGREEMENT. THE RLG WISHED TO HAVE THE BODIES PRESCRIBED IN ARTICLE 11 OF THE AGREEMENT NAMED AND FUNCTIONING BEFORE SUCH A PROTOCOL WAS DRAWN UP. WE BELIEVED THAT BOTH SIDES' POSITIONS HAD MERIT, AND BELIEVED THAT THEY COULD BE RECONCILED EASILY IF SOME ASSISTANCE WAS PROVIDED TO THE MEAGER CAPABILITY AVAILABLE TO THE RLG NEGOTIATORS IN DEVISING SUCH A PROTOCOL. THE ASSISTANCE WE FURNISHED TO CHIEF RLG NEGOTIATOR PHENG PHONGSAVAN ON MARCH 14 SEEMS TO HAVE DONE THE TRICK, JUDGING FROM THIS MORNING' S PRESS AND OTHER REPORTS.

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2. TODAY'S NEWSPAPERS INDICATED THAT THE RLG/ LPF GROUPS CONCERNED WITH MILITARY AND POLITICAL QUESTIONS MET THURSDAY, MARCH 15, AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ALMOST A WEEK, PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE AT BOTH MEETINGS.

3. FOLLOWING POLITICAL SESSION, RLG DEL SPOKESMAN TOLD PRESS THAT BOTH SIDES HAD DEFINITELY AGREED THAT MARCH 23 WOULD BE DATE OF FORMATION OF NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT, AS PRESCRIBED BY VIENTIANE AGREEMENT. HE ADDED THAT MEETING HAD DISCUSSED MANY POLITICAL DETAILS, PARTICULARLY CHOICE OF INDIVIDUALS FOR MINISTERIAL POSTS AND NUMBER AND APPORTIONMENT OF PORTFOLIOS OF NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES. LPF DEL REPORTEDLY INDICATED WHAT PORTFOLIOS IT DESIRED BUT NO DETAILS WERE MADE AVAILABLE PUBLICLY ON THIS POINT. ANOTHER MEETING OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE IS SLATED FOR TODAY, MARCH 16.

4. MILITARY GROUP REPORTEDLY ALSO FOCUSED ON CONCRETE DETAILS OF ALL MILITARY QUESTIONS. SPOKESMEN TOLD PRESS AFTERWARDS THAT TWO SIDES HAD AGREED THAT, TO MOVE NEGOTIATIONS FORWARD RAPIDLY, THEY WOULD EXCHANGE DRAFTS FOR JOINT PROTOCOL TO IMPLEMENT VIENTIANE AGREEMENT. TWO SIDES AGREED TO EXAMINE BOTH DRAFTS IN ATTEMPT TO RECONCILE DIFFERENCES AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. HOWEVER, LPF OBJECTED TO HOLDING PRESS CONFERENCES AFTER SESSIONS, WHILE RLG WANTS THEM CONTINUED. (COMMENT: IN THIS REGARD, WE THINK CANCELLATION OF PRESS CONFERENCES WOULD FACILITATE NEGOTIATIONS FOR BOTH SIDES BY REDUCING PROPAGANDA VOLUME, AND WE INTEND TO URGE RLG TO AGREE TO LPF REQUEST.)

5. IN ADDITION TO THE APPARENT BREAKTHROUGH AT THE AFOREMENTIONED MEETINGS, THERE ARE OTHER INDICATIONS THAT ALL PARTIES TO THE LAOS DISPUTE ARE GETTING GEARED UP FOR WHAT WILL BE THE MOST CRUCIAL WEEK IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. EARLY THIS WEEK, SOVIET EMBOFFS BEGAN CALLING ON THEIR COUNTERPARTS TO PRESENT VARIOUS VERSIONS OF THE LPF'S DESIRES FOR SEATS IN THE NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT. ON MARCH 15, THE CHINESE AND NORTH VIETNAMESE CHARGES CALLED ON ICC/ LAOS CANDEL LAOS TO EXPRESS CONCERN OVER THE SLOW PACE OF THE TALKS, AND WORRY THAT THIS DELAY MIGHT ALLOW " RIGHTIST ELEMENTS" LATITUDE FOR AN EFFORT TO OVERTURN THE AGREEMENT.

6. THE FORTHCOMING WEEK WILL BE A TENSE AND DIFFICULT ONE. IT
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WILL WITNESS THE MOST VITAL SHOWDOWN FOR ALL THE INTERESTS OF ALL

THE LAO PARTIES AND FACTIONS: THE DIVISION OF POWER IN THE
INTERIM GOVERNMENT.

7. THE LAO NEVER HURRY TO A SHOWDOWN, AND IT IS NO SURPRISE
THAT THEY HAVE NOT PRESSED FORWARD DURING THE PAST THREE WEEKS,
DESPITE OUR CONSTANT EXHORTATIONS. THE DELAY MAY HAVE RESULTED
FROM LPF STALLING, BUT IT WAS ALSO CAUSED BY THE UNWILLINGNESS
OF THE RIGHTIST ELEMENTS IN THE RLG TO ADJUST TO THE CHANGED
CIRCUMSTANCES PRODUCED BY THE VIENTIANE AGREEMENT. WE EXPECT THE
HARD BARGAINING ON COMPOSITION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT TO GO
RIGHT DOWN TO THE DEADLINE OF 1100 HOURS MARCH 23, NOT ONLY
BETWEEN SOUVANNA AND PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, BUT ALSO BETWEEN
SOUVANNA
AND THE RIGHTISTS, ON WHAT IS NOW THE GUT ISSUE FOR EVERYONE.
GODLEY

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